

NOTES FOR A TOAST BY SPEAKER KINSELLA TO THE AMBASSADOR OF CANADA TO THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC

Your Excellency Ambassador Fox, Honourable parliamentarians,
Senator Giulio Andreotti, Mr. Casini,
Professor Egidi, Rector, LUISS University,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me begin by thanking Canadian Ambassador James Fox. Thanks to your warm reception and Italian hospitality, my trip here has been most productive and enjoyable.

Ambassador Fox, I am particularly pleased to make your acquaintance. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Canada's Ambassador to Italy. Previously, you served as Canada's Ambassador to Guatemala and to El Salvador. I am certain that your wealth of diplomatic experience and wide-ranging expertise will facilitate cooperation between Canada and Italy. Again – my congratulations.

You know, of course, that Canada has very close ties with Italy. The Italian community in Canada is one of the largest outside Italy. Well over one million Canadians have some degree of Italian ancestry.

Indeed, the cultural traditions and the work ethic of the many Canadians of Italian origin have become part of the mainstream of Canadian life. Through their hard work and determination, the Italians

who migrated to Canada to work in the construction industry, the mining industry, and the food industry built the Canada we know today.

Once they became established, Canadians of Italian origin became active in politics. In 1976, the late Pietro Rizzuto became Canada's first senator of Italian origin. Recently, Canadian Gino Bucchino was elected to represent the North and Central America district seat in the Italian Chamber of Deputies. This initiative exemplifies the sense of pride Italians bring with them wherever they go, and is indicative of our mutual respect for parliamentary systems.

Given the strong cultural ties between our two countries and given our advanced economies, our bilateral relations are naturally very close. Italy and Canada work closely in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations, the G8, the World Trade Organization, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. No country has been immune from the recent economic downturn. Yet, it is institutions such as these, in addition to our good bilateral relations, that will enable us to travel down the path to recovery together. Indeed, our economies will persevere, we will continue to trade and invest in each other, and we will move forward.

Good relations between parliamentarians are an important component of this thriving relationship. In addition to exchanges such as this, within the Canadian Parliament we have the official Canada-Italy Friendship Group, which promotes the expansion of relations between our two countries.

Canadian and Italian parliamentarians also work together in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As far as the latter is concerned, we are fortunate to have with us Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini. He was President of the IPU from 2005 to 2008 and before that he was President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. I am positive that he can attest to the fact that the IPU continues to be a key forum for multilateral cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy.

Ambassador Fox, I am very grateful to have this opportunity to discuss the challenges the Italian-Canadian relationship can expect to face over the next few years. These dialogues undoubtedly advance our understanding of the many issues in which we have common concerns. In closing, I would like to thank you once again for your charming hospitality.

Cin cin! [pronounced chin-chin] Cheers!